



Trail Talk

2016

Summer Edition

Wow, has it been a busy year and I do apologize for not getting a newsletter out until this point. I would like to take this section to say thanks to all of the great volunteers who have contributed time and sweat to the Conasauga Ranger District this spring.

The Conasauga District Trail Volunteers (CDTV) have been working hard in the Cohutta Wilderness. They have been cleaning waterbars, clearing trails, and cutting blow-downs throughout the Wilderness. The **Friends of Dry Creek** have been keeping that system in tip top shape. **Mark Voykovic** has made several patrols this spring into the Jacks River Falls Closure area, teaching Leave No Trace and helping me rehab the illegal campsites. The District also hosted the **Northern Illinois University (NIU)** alternative spring break group again this year. NIU sent two groups down this year, one group worked on improving the loading ramp at Houston Valley OHV trail and the other group came with me into the Wilderness and completed a small reroute on the Horseshoe Bend Trail. Last but not least, **Bill Hester** found the time to cut 50+ blown down trees off of the Chickamauga Creek Trail. I know that there are many others that I am forgetting and more still who did not submit their time to us. **To all of you, named and unnamed, I would like to whole heartedly thank you for all of your contributions to the trails of the Conasauga Ranger District.**

Please take time to look at the last two pages of the newsletter. This is where all of the upcoming volunteer events are listed as well as all the local volunteer groups that contribute towards the district. Please come out and join one our wonderful groups for a day of trail work. You will be surprised what a difference it makes and how much you will enjoy yourself.





Thank You Dry Creek Trail Volunteers May 7, 2016

By Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader



Some folks wanted to help but were unavailable on Saturday, so they brought mowers and trimmers and mowed the short grass areas of the trailhead on Friday evening. These volunteers were **Kathy and Eddie Henson, and Amy and Gene Findley**. Our Saturday volunteers were **Debbie and Larry Parks, Ilona Hester, Bill Hester, and Larry Wheat**. The weather was perfect- warm and dry. There were several horse trailers in the parking lot when we finished our work.

We completed the trailhead mowing and bush hogging, plus some brush trimming on the short trails from the trailhead to the creek and the connector from the trailhead to the Green trail. Larry Parks provided his tractor and bush hog to mow the parking areas and perimeter of the trailhead.



Bill Hester operated the USFS trail machine to repair one muddy area on the upper Red Trail (#240) that was

reopened last month.



Our next general trail workday is planned for **Saturday, June 4th**. This is the National Trails Day®. We hope to have a large turnout of volunteers that day to demonstrate their appreciation for public trails in northwest Georgia. Please plan ahead and join other volunteers who appreciate the 29 miles of shared use trail encompassed in the Dry Creek Trail System.



CDTV on the Tearbritches Trail June 11, 2016

By Robert Edmondson

It was time to pick up the bottom half of the water bars on Tearbritches. **Jim Leatherwood, Larry Thomas, Robert Edmondson, and Wanda Brown** hit the trailhead at the top end after dropping off a vehicle near the Hickory Creek trailhead. The water bars were filled with fairly soft soil, which allowed this small team to knock out a whole bunch of them and finish up the bars on Tearbritches. On this particularly steep trail, water bar work often involves a balancing act where one of your feet is two feet lower than the other!

After wrapping up the work portion of this day, we walked through the beautiful area around Bray Field by the Conasauga River and had our lunch on the river bank. Larry brought a large bag of trail mix with a significant quantity of M&Ms – it didn't last long....

After lunch we hiked out along the Hickory Creek Trail on what turned out to be a fairly pleasant June day. This portion of the HCT follows the Conasauga for a good while and provides gorgeous scenery. Once we made it to the HCT trailhead, we climbed into Wanda's vehicle thinking our adventures were complete, but they weren't. A few miles into the drive back to the Ball Field, we spotted a bear cub darting off the left side of the road into the woods. Then, about five minutes later, we spotted a second cub darting off to the right! It's always a treat to see a bear out here, but two within a five minute span of time is really something!



Many thanks to these volunteers for their work on the Tearbritches Trail.

Celebration of National Trails Day® 2016 with Pinhoti-Dry Creek Volunteers

By Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader



We, the collaborative volunteer team that supports parts of the regional Pinhoti Trail and the Dry Creek Trail System, completed significant trail maintenance tasks on June 4th, National Trails Day®. There were six volunteers working on the Strawberry Mountain section of the Pinhoti Trail, and seven volunteers cutting brush and weeds on selected Dry Creek trails. Additionally, Ed Lang of the US Forest Service provided a couple of brush trimmers for our use and shared in group discussions. Our volunteer team typically consists of folks from BCHNWG, NWGA SORBA, hiking and other supporters. A heartfelt thanks to each of the volunteers for contributing their time and resources so that all users may enjoy superb trails.



The Saturday volunteers were **Marcus Moore, Joe Schoech, John West, Anthony Emanuel, Patti Nethery, Patricia Petelle, Pic Petelle, Bill Hester, Marlene Hayes, Bettina Langham, Barry Langham, Marty Dominy, and Larry Wheat.** We have been blessed with help from local residents and this workday was no exception. Thursday **Larry Parks** brought his tractor and bush hog, and a mower, and mowed essentially all of the Dry Creek trailhead. **Kathy and Eddie**

Henson came over Friday evening and did trimming and some brush cutting at the trailhead. So the trailhead looked great when we arrived.



Strawberry Mountain had several trees down on the Pinhoti Trail. Sawyers Bill Hester, Marcus Moore, and Joe Schoech cleared the deadfall. Marty Dominy trimmed vegetation.



The southwestern 1.3 miles of the Strawberry trail is a grassy/weedy closed road that makes a great trail but each year it produces a healthy growth of weeds that are 2-4 feet tall. Volunteers routinely mow this trail each summer to support general use, and also as preparation for bicycle and foot races. John West provided his tractor and bush hog and did a great job mowing the grass and weeds.



Regrets, the Dry Creek trail team did not provide any pictures of their work. Patricia and Pic Petelle operated their brush mower, and others used brush trimmers, weed eaters, loppers or swing blades to cut trail-side brush, briars, and weeds. They mowed parts of the lower Red Trail, the upper Red Trail, and the Bridle connecting trail. There is still brush and weed control needed on that portion of the upper Red trail that was closed for over a year due to logging damage to the trail. The trail was reopened a few months ago, and is quite usable, but some trimming is needed.



Upon completion of the tasks described above, we held our “traditional” snack sharing and post-work feedback and discussions. Six out of 14 volunteers stayed to participate. This low level of participation has been common. Those who do participate seem to be most interested in sharing feedback and discussing various trail-related topics, with little interest for the snack sharing aspect.

Therefore, unless someone else manages post-work food, there will not be any snack sharing planned. We will still encourage discussion and eating our lunches. BCHNWG will continue to provide iced water and electrolyte drinks for participants throughout the day.

The final task of the day was to replace two trail signposts that were destroyed a few months ago during a prescribed burn. We finally got transportation, signposts, post driver and volunteers together and completed that installation at the south end of the trail system. Joe Schoech is shown doing the heavy work.

Our next general trail workday is tentatively planned for **Saturday, July 9th**. However I will not be available in July other than perhaps in an at-home administrative role. The team is considering starting work earlier to avoid the summer heat. Other options may be explored. Keep tuned in, watching for Facebook announcements and emails.

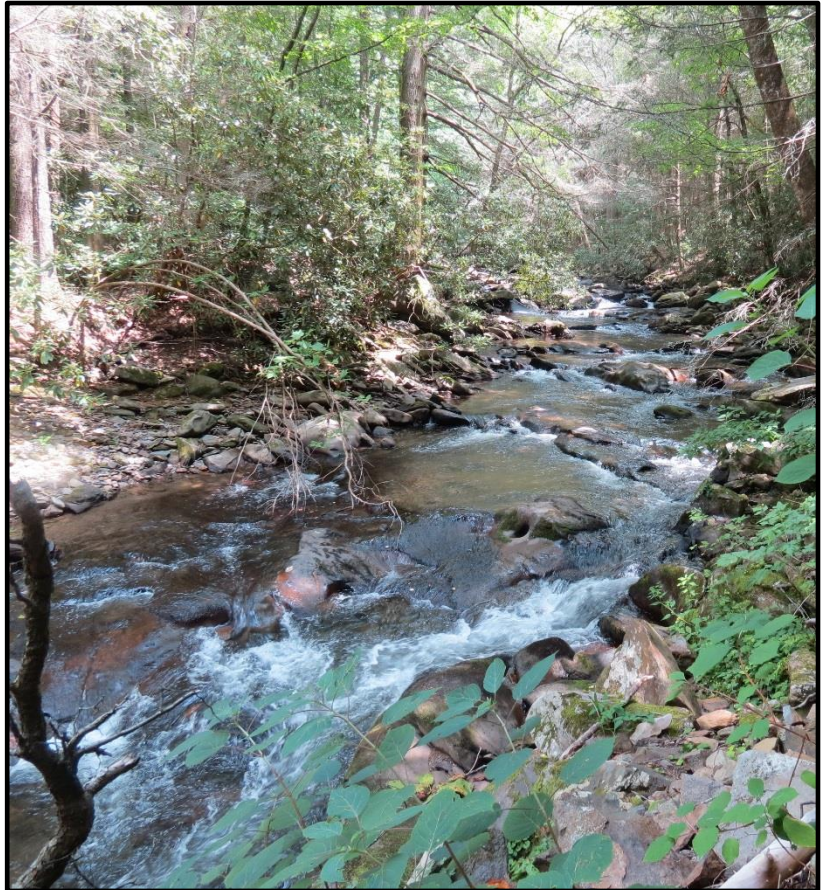




CDTV on the Jacks River Trail

By Robert Edmondson

Last summer, CDTV weed whacked a few miles at the west end of the Jacks. Now it was time to pick up where we left off. However, the big question for the group was, “How can we quickly hike to the point we left off last summer?” **Jim Leatherwood, Larry Thomas, Robert Edmondson, Wanda Brown, and a new volunteer, Daniel Higinbotham** talked things over and decided to drive a little to the east, park in an area Larry knew was fairly close to the river, and bush whack down to the river. Then, we ran into a friendly forest ranger we knew (who shall remain nameless) who convinced us to start at a different point and follow an old road bed down to the river. We’re still not sure what happened, but we quickly ended up off the road and into a creek bed. We made it to the river via the creek bed, but it was slow going, taking us about an hour to reach the river.



Once on the river, the group started work sling blading and lopping while moving east on the JRT. We ate lunch on rocks in the river, which is always a treat, and made it to our turnaround point at the junction with the Horseshoe Bend Trail.

After contemplating the difficult trip down that creek bed, the group unanimously decided NOT to give it a go UPHILL! Instead we hiked out along the JRT to the trailhead where we still had one vehicle. Larry had a cooler filled with ice cold drinks, which were gobbled up quickly by all. All told, we made 14 river crossings, and that makes for a very fun summer day.

As always, we thank our volunteers for the work they put in to keep our wilderness trails accessible for everyone.

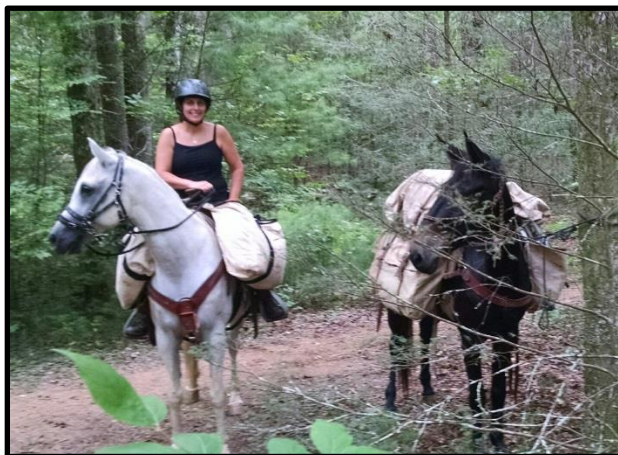
Cleaning Up Beech Bottoms

By: Linda Norton

About 2 weeks ago I was notified by Jim Holland that someone had left a bunch of camping supplies on one of the trails close to the Jacks River trail. Some members of a SAWS crew had carried it down to Beech Bottoms and they needed it packed out. Jim called our club, Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen, as it is easier for us to access from our side. I said we'd get it and my niece, Holly Neidich, called some friends who pack, **Marty &**



Fostana Jenkins, and they agreed to help; they had their friends, **Dylan & Abby Swilley** with them. They had some newbie mules who needed some training packing before they take them out west elk hunting this fall and we needed the help. We waited until we had a cooler day and started down; Fostana had her hands full keeping her mule in tow. It was a learning curve for me as I just wind around, jump, or dismount for trees that have fallen. Not so for mules carrying bulky packs! So basically we cleared the trail on our way down which involved cutting some trees and limbs and fighting off the bees that lived around them. Several of us and the animals got stung and one horse even fell off the trail trying to get away. Got to love summer and those darn bees! The trash consisted of 6 lawn chairs, 2 cots, a tent, a sleeping bag and some paper and



plastic trash. I was soon informed the chairs and cots stuck up too high and we had to break them all apart to fit in the packs. My weight came in useful for stomping and breaking up aluminum furniture. The trip out was much less eventful, although my friend, Kerri Humphreys, worried the whole way about having to pass the two places where we got stung on the way down. Fortunately only my dog got stung on the trip out. The trip was a success and the wilderness is a little cleaner.

Dates for the 2016

August 6, 2016 – Dry Creek/Pinhoti Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

August 13, 2016 – CDTV, Rice Camp Trail
Trail clearing/crosscut work
contact Larry Thomas
at lrthomas68@gmail.com

September 10, 2016 – CDTV, Hemp Top Trail
Sling blading/trail clearing
contact Larry Thomas
at lrthomas68@gmail.com

September 10, 2016 – Dry Creek/Pinhoti Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

October 1, 2016 – Dry Creek/Pinhoti Work Day
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

October 8, 2016 – CDTV, Cohutta Wilderness (TBA)
contact Larry Thomas
at lrthomas68@gmail.com

October 8, 2016 – Bear Creek Mega Workday
Contact Terry Palmeri
at Terry.Palmeri@imba.com

November 5, 2016 - Dry Creek/Pinhoti Work Day
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

November 5, 2016 - CDTV, Hemp Top Trail
Waterbar maintenance
contact Larry Thomas
at lrthomas68@gmail.com





For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations who are committed to helping us provide a safe, enjoyable trail experience for our forest users...

Team Conasauga: www.teamconasauga.org or www.facebook.com/teamconasauga

Friends of Dry Creek: www.facebook.com/groups/DryCreek/

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): www.nwgasorba.org

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Ellijay Mountain Biking Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

Southern Off-Road Bike Association (SORBA): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org

Co-Trails: www.cotrails.org

Any interested people, please
contact me at
kvasalinda@fs.fed.us. Thanks
and see you on the trail.

~Kevin~

